Raising of Hl-B Visa

4908. SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during President Clinton's visit to India recently, India had asked to raise Hl-B visas from 1,15,000 to 1,95,000 over a period of three years; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) During the recent visit of President Clinton to India, discussions were held on a wide range of issues of mutual interest including cooperation in field of hi-technology. However, there was no specific discussion on Hl-B Visas.

(b) Does not arise

Strategic Consultations with Britain

4909. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister to EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that India does not have a formal treaty so far with Britain on holding "periodic strategic consultations" similar on the lines of the one started with Germany and already shared with France, Russia and other countries;

(b) whether the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook's reported official meeting held in New Delhi on 17.4.2000 with him being seen "in the inauguration of such a permanent institution"; and

(c) if so, what are the details/outcome of discussion held between him and Foreign Minister of India and U.K.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFA IRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) While India does not have a formal treaty with Britain, there are periodic high-level consultations between the two countries, both at the Ministerial and officials levels.

(b) and (c) The visit to India by Mr. Robin Cook, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 15—18 April 2000, referred to in the Hindustan Times news item of 16th April 2000, was in response to an official invitation by Government of India. The discussions held during the visit have contributed to an enhanced understanding on bilateral issues as